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SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
20 February 1985

CIA Responds to Charges

BY GEORGE V. LAUDER

Normally, the CIA does not respond to articles written about it. However, because Allan Goodman's article ("What's Wrong with U.S. Intelligence Agencies," January 30 Briefing) concerns an area of the agency's activities where we can speak publicly and because the article is so inaccurate, we believe the record should be corrected.

Goodman left the agency in 1980 and his information concerning it is seriously outdated. A point-by-point rebuttal of all of his errors and recommendations would take too much time and space. Thus, I will only address the most egregious of his inaccuracies:

■ Goodman states that the intelligence community does not study its failures and that in the few instances where post-mortems have been undertaken the results are not widely disseminated or discussed.

Fact: In recent years, the director of intelligence has assigned a senior group of distinguished officials the task of evaluating some 15 major historical intelligence problems and to evaluate retrospectively at one and two year intervals virtually every estimate now prepared.

The Directorate of Intelligence also has its own evaluation staff. These evaluations are widely shared with the concerned organizations.

■ Goodman asserts that analysts learn to be wary of doing longer range or in-depth studies and that the task of writing estimates and think pieces is to be avoided.

Fact: In the last 3½ years, a substantial percentage of new analytical resources has been devoted to strengthening long-term research. In the last year alone, more than 700 long-term research assessments were published.

■ Goodman asserts that the intelligence community has few analysts posted abroad.

Fact: One of the benefits of new resources in recent years has been a significant expansion of the number of analysts assigned overseas and, for the first time, there are adequate funds for analysts to travel and work overseas.

■ Goodman states that attempts to reach out to academics are strongly resisted.

Fact: The CIA has expanded dramatically its contacts not only with academicians but also with think tanks and the private sector.... Analysts are required to obtain outside training every two years either through academic course work or through attendance at conferences and seminars.

■ Goodman states that analysts should do more to distinguish between what they know and do not know, identify those judgments based on specific evidence from those based on speculation, and make projections about the future.

Fact: One of the principal objectives of new, far more intensive substantive review of CIA analysis is to ensure that our analysts are putting before the policymaker not only a more explicit description of their evidence but also are distinguishing between what is analysis and what is based on evidence, as well as our view of the reliability of that evidence. And when we specu-

late, the reasons behind our speculation are included.

■ Goodman states that the blocking of critical analyses unwelcome to policymakers has been consistent in recent years.

Fact: The charges of the blocking of critical estimates because they were critical of policy are false; the agency continues to publish a wide range of estimates without regard to the political consequences for policies that may be affected....we would simply note that neither oversight committee of the Congress, which — unlike Goodman — has access to our assessments has reached his conclusions.

In sum, many of the policies Goodman advocates with respect to improving the quality of analysis, already have been implemented.

While we recognize there is always room for improvement and there are still occasional lapses, the fact remains the policies are in place. And just as Goodman predicted, these changes in analytical methods and management have reduced the failure rate for American intelligence.

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